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VI. *An Account of several Persons seized with the Goal-Fever, working in Newgate; and of the Manner, in which the Infection was communicated to one intire Family; by John Pringle, M. D. F. R. S.*

Read Feb. 1, 1753 **H**AVING lately had an opportunity of seeing several cases of the true goal-fever arising from the gaol itself, I thought it would not be improper to lay before the Society a short account of the manner, in which those persons were seized, the chief symptoms and progress of the disease, with some remarks upon it, in order farther to illustrate what I have advanced elsewhere, concerning the danger arising from foul air, and the agreement of this distemper with what has been called the fever of the hospital, or more generally a malignant or pestilential fever.

In the month of October 1750, a committee of the court of aldermen was appointed to inquire into the best means for procuring in Newgate such a purity of air, as might prevent the rise of those infectious distempers, which not only had been destructive to the prisoners themselves, but dangerous to others, who had any communication with them; and particularly to the courts of justice upon the trial of malefactors; whereof a fatal instance had occurred that year at the sessions held in the Old-Bailey, when the lord mayor, two of the judges, and one of the aldermen upon the bench, with several other persons then present, were seized with a malignant fever, and died.

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The reverend Dr. Hales and I being consulted by the committee upon the point referred to them, and having visited the gaol in company with those gentlemen; it was then agreed, that, considering the smallness of the place, in proportion to the number of the prisoners, it would be proper to make a farther trial of the ventilator, and to have it worked by a machine, in the manner of a windmill, to be erected for that purpose upon the leads of Newgate.

This scheme was laid before the court of aldermen, and approved of, but not put in execution till near two years after. For on the 11 of July 1752, Dr. Hales acquainted Dr. Knight and me, that several of the tubes were finished, and that the machine had been going about six weeks; wherefore, being desirous to see the effects, he had appointed Mr. Stibbs the carpenter, employed in that work, to meet him that day at Newgate, and desired us to go along with. We went accordingly, and having visited several of the wards, we were all of us very sensible, that such as were provided with ventilating tubes were much less offensive than the rest that wanted them; and Dr. Hales and I could perceive a considerable improvement made upon the air of the whole gaol, since the time we had been first there with the committee. Some of the wards were so free from any smell peculiar to such places, that I am persuaded, were Dr. Hales's design completed, and a person appointed to regulate the sliders of the tubes, and to keep the machine in order, the usual bad consequences from foul and crowded goals, might in a great measure, if not wholly, be prevented in Newgate.

One of the wards allotted for the women had a small room adjoining to it, in which they usually slept. Both places seem'd at that time well air'd, tho' the latter was close, and, if I mistake not, without either window or chimney. The prisoners informed us, that, before this ward received the tube, this sleeping-place had been very offensive, but that soon after it became sweet; and tho' upon the first working of the ventilator they had been more sickly than before, they soon recover'd their health, and had preserved it ever since. Now from this account we must not infer, that any danger will arise from a sudden change of bad air for good; since this accident may be better accounted for from another circumstance, which we were then likewise told of; *viz.* that this ward of the women had been supplied by a ventilating tube before those in the lower story, where the air being in a more corrupted state, it had passed from thence thro' the seams of the floor, and other passages, to replace that, which was drawn off by the tube in the ward above: but that after the bad air was exhausted, the benefit of the fresh air soon appeared, by the better health of the prisoners.

But as it was not my design in this paper to set forth all the advantages, that may be expected from the ventilator, I shall leave that subject to be treated of by the ingenious inventor of it; and shall only take notice, that the tubes from the several wards, uniting in one great trunk, convey all the putrid steams by that channel into the atmosphere, through a vent made for that purpose in the leads of Newgate; and that tho' the wind was moderate during the time we staid in the gaol, yet we observed, that the ventilator

lator threw out a considerable stream of air, of a most offensive smell.

Before we parted, Mr. Stibbs informed us, that Clayton Hand, one of his journeymen, whilst he was employed in setting up the tubes, was seized with a fever, and carried to St. Thomas's hospital, after lying some days ill at his own house. Whereupon, apprehending that this man's sickness might be owing to the air of the gaol, Dr. Knight and I having the curiosity a few days after to go to St. Thomas's to make the inquiry, we found the patient sitting in one of the courts, recovered of his fever, tho' still weak, and had the following account from himself:

He said, that upon first finding himself indisposed, he had left off work for some days; but upon growing better he had returned to Newgate. That soon after happening to open one of the tubes of the old ventilator, which had stood there for three or four years, such an offensive smell issued from it, that being immediately seized with a nausea and sickness at his stomach, he was obliged to go home, and that the night after he fell into a fever, in which he lay about eight days before his friends carried him to the hospital. That becoming soon delirious, he recollected no other symptom, succeeding these mentioned, besides frequent retchings to vomit, a trembling of his hands, and a constant head-ach. This man had taken no medicine before he came into St. Thomas's, and since that time was attended by Dr. Reeves; but, as that gentleman was not then present, we were informed by the apothecary, that Clayton Hand had been admitted in the advanced state of a continued fever,

fever, attended with a stupor, and a sunk pulse, and that the fever had not left him till several days after his admission. The nurse's account was, that he had all along lain like one stupified, and that, after the fever went off, he had continued for some time very dull of hearing. We could learn nothing certain about the precise duration of the fever, but from what the patient and his attendants told us, we collected, that he must have been ill between two and three weeks. So that from all these marks we made little doubt, but that this person had been ill of the true gaol-distemper; and were confirmed in our opinion by the following circumstance.

In company with the convalescent was one Thomas Wilmot, another of Mr. Stibbs's journeymen, who had likewise worked in Newgate, and whom we remembered a few days before to have seen in that place, very active, and in perfect health. This man told us, he had come to see his companion, but as he apprehended himself in danger of falling into the same fever, he should therefore be glad of our advice. Upon examination we found his tongue white, his pulse quick, and that he complained of a pain and confusion of his head, with a shaking of his hands, and a weakness in his limbs. He said his disorder had come on gradually, since the time we saw him in Newgate, but that he was then so very ill, he could work no longer. From which account it appeared to us, that this man had also caught the infection; but as the fever seemed not to be quite formed, we had hopes of stopping its progress: and with this view we advised him to take a vomit, and on the following night a sudorific. He followed the prescription,

prescription, and the effects shall afterwards be mentioned.

After Wilmot had told us his own case he informed us of the indisposition of three more of his companions, who had been likewise employed by Mr. Stibbs in Newgate : whereupon we took their direction, visited them, and found them all ill of the gaol-distemper.

The first was Michael Sewel, who lodged in the Swan-yard near Newgate. This man had been ten days confined to his bed, without taking any medicine. He was then delirious, and had the petechial eruption : but observing, that he lay in a close, ill-air'd, and dirty room, without any attendants but his wife, then suckling a child, we believed he had no chance to recover where he was, and therefore recommended his case to Mr. Stibbs, who procured his admission that day into St. Thomas's hospital ; where he also recover'd.

The second was Adam Chaddocks, who lay at a green-shop in the little Old Bailey. He was taken ill on the same day with the former, and had used no medicine. He had likewise the petechial spots upon his breast and back ; and tho' he was not altogether insensible, was affected with a stupor attended with a sunk pulse, and other symptoms of the distemper. His landlady, who took care of him, informed us, that he had been troubled with retchings to vomit, and an head-ach from the beginning, and that for some days past he had been seized with a looseness, and that his stools were very offensive. As the room this person lay in was large and well-air'd, we did not think it necessary to remove him, but recommended

recommended him to the care of Dr. Pate, physician of St. Bartholomew's hospital, who attended him till he recover'd.

The third was John Dobie, apprentice to Mr. Stibbs, a lad about 15 years of age, who liv'd with his parents in a court by the White Bear in Canon-street. We saw him on the same day with the other two, which was the fourteenth of his sickness, and the twelfth since he took to his bed. His mother told us, that some of the journeymen working in Newgate had forced him to go down into the great trunk of the ventilator, in order to bring up a wig, which one of them had thrown into it; and that, as the machine was then working, he had almost been suffocated with the stench, before they could get him up. That upon coming home he complained of a violent head-ach, a great disorder in his stomach, with retchings to vomit, which had never intirely left him. We found him extremely low, with a sunk pulse, a delirium, and an unusual anxiety or oppression about his breast. This last symptom we ascribed to the opiates he was then taking for a looseness, which had come on two or three days before we saw him. He being in no condition to be moved, and being besides well attended by his mother, and in a well-aired chamber, we prescribed to him there, and repeated our visits, till he was quite free of the fever. It was observable, that before he was taken ill, he had been twice let down into the great trunk of the ventilator, when the machine was standing still, without complaining of any ill smell, or receiving any hurt thereby; but that the last time, when the machine was working, he immediately cried out he was ready to  
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be suffocated ; and the two men who helped him out, by receiving the foul steam from the trunk, were both set a vomiting so violently as to bring up blood.

On the 23 of August, Thomas Wilmot, above-mention'd, called upon Dr. Knight, and told him, that, after taking the vomit and sudorific, he had immediately recover'd ; but begg'd him to see his wife, who then lay ill of a fever, at his house in Snow's-fields, Southwark. The doctor suspecting, that this woman's indisposition might be owing to the contagion received from her husband, acquainted me with it, and carried me to see her. There we were informed, that Wilmot's daughter, a girl of eight years old, who lay with her parents, had been seized with a fever, soon after her father's recovery ; that she had been ill about a fortnight, and they believed had spots upon her breast, but that she had recover'd without any medicine. That her mother had not only nurs'd her, but continued to lie with her ; and that some time after the girl's recovery, the mother began to complain, and soon after fell into a fever ; and that it was the twelfth day since she was confined to her bed. This woman having the *petechiæ*, a stupor, with deafness, and a sunk pulse, there was no doubt of her being likewise infected with the distemper, and probably by her daughter. As she had been without any assistance, we advised her husband to send for Mr. Breach, apothecary, in the Borough, who having served in the hospital of the army during the war, was well acquainted with the nature of such fevers ; and having left directions with him, we did not return till after the crisis ; which happen'd upon the 16 or 17 day from the time she was confined to her bed.

Some time after this, Mr. Breach the apothecary informed us, that he was again employ'd in Thomas Wilmot's family; for that Elizabeth Marshall, his sister-in-law, after nursing his wife, was taken ill of the same kind of fever, and desired our assistance. This person we found in the same bed, and in the same condition, in which we had seen her sister some time before; and in the room with her, in another bed, a son of Wilmot's, a boy of nine years old, ill of the same distemper. The former had been attack'd on the 15 of September, and the latter the day before. The woman's fever ran out the ordinary length of 16 or 17 days, but the boy's came some days sooner to a crisis, and was all along of a milder nature. She recover'd very slowly, complaining of great weakness, deafness, and a confusion in her head, the ordinary consequence of these malignant fevers.

One day, in my return from this house, I call'd at St. Thomas's hospital, to inquire for one William Thomson, a lad of about 16 years of age, who, as Wilmot then told me, was another of Mr. Stibbs's journeymen, and had been taken ill by working in Newgate, since the three he had mention'd before. This lad was recover'd, but not yet dismiss'd. He said, that upon finding himself growing ill, he had left his work, and kept at home for about a week, complaining of a pain in the hinder part of his head, and in his back, of a trembling of his hands, and of restless nights; that his feverish indisposition increasing, he had been obliged to take to his bed, where he lay about eight days before he was sent to the hospital. The apothecary added, that he had continued under their care about the same number of days before  
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the turn of his fever; that his pulse had been extremely low all that time, and that they believed him to be in the utmost danger. He added, that the wife of Michael Sewel (the second patient they had received of those, who had been employ'd in Newgate) some days after her husband's admission, came to seek advice for herself, and that her complaints had been the same with Wilmot's at the time we saw him: he added, that he had given her some medicines, but had heard nothing of her since.

On the last day of December Mr. Breach informed me, that about a month before, he had been call'd to attend Thomas Wilmot; but as he died before he saw him, he could give no other account of his sickness, than as they told him; *viz.* that he had long been in a bad state of health, and that at last he became feverish, and went off with a looseness.

In the beginning of this month (January 1753) the widow applied to Dr. Hales and me, in order to have the distress of her family attested, and laid before the lord mayor, in hopes of having some provision made for them. Upon which occasion we learned, that Thomas Wilmot her husband, after taking the sudorific, so far recover'd as to work at his business; but that tho' he did not return to Newgate, yet his strength would not permit him to continue at work above a day or two at a time; still complaining of an head-ach, and pains across his breast, or, as he express'd it, about his heart, of a feebleness of his limbs, a shaking of his hands, and a constant drought. That notwithstanding these ailments he went daily, till a week before he died, when he grew very weak, and more feverish, had sometimes profuse sweats, and

at other times a looseness, and that both these excretions and also his breath were remarkably offensive. That at last he was seized with convulsions, and having three fits in one day, he died in the last of them. Mrs. Wilmot added, that her youngest son James, a boy of four years of age, was after the father's decease seized with the spotted fever of the same kind with what had prevail'd in the family, but that he recover'd; and that her own mother Eleonore Megget, who did not live in the house, but came often to see and attend them, was also taken ill of a fever, but without spots, and died about ten days after her husband. She concluded with telling us, that the distress of her family had been the greater, by her being deprived of all assistance from their neighbours, who having thus seen the whole family, one after another, seized with this fever, were as much afraid to come near them, as if they had been infected with the plague.

This is all the account I believed necessary to be laid before the Society; since a more particular history of it, with regard to its symptoms, nature and cure, would have been but a repetition of what I had already published, concerning the malignant fever of the hospital, from which these cases are in nothing different.

It will be proper to add, that, besides these six persons, that were taken ill by working in Newgate, and whom I saw, there was another, called Rust, as Mr. Stibbs has lately informed me, but whom I never visited. So that, besides Wilmot's whole family, and Sewel's wife, who received the contagion at second-hand,

hand, there were seven originally infected in the gaol, out of eleven only, who were employ'd by the master-carpenter in that place. Now as most of these seven were attack'd within a few days of one another, and by the same kind of fever, it is not to be doubted but that the distemper was owing to the corrupted air of Newgate. From all which it appears, how requisite it is, that the public should take such measures, as may prevent the like accidents arising from foul and crouded gaols; or indeed from any place, wherein a multitude of people are long, closely, and nastily kept; and which in all probability can never be obtain'd without a constant change of air.

Nor are fevers of this kind to be accounted among such rare occurrences, as require no particular provision to be made against them; since from this very instance it appears, how often disasters of this kind may happen, without any notice being taken of them. Had it not been for the accident of our going at that time to Newgate, hearing of the first man's illness, and seeing his companion with him, all these men might have been ill, and not only the public but most of themselves ignorant of the cause. And as for Wilmot's family, they might have received the infection, and even all perished by it, without any person being convinc'd of the danger arising from gaols, or the contagious and malignant nature of the fever, excepting a few in the neighbourhood, which is a remote and obscure quarter of this city.

I shall reserve what farther remarks I have made on these cases for a second paper, to be laid before the Society at another meeting; and shall only subjoin a letter, which I received a few days since from Mr.

Stibbs,

Stibbs, as another voucher for the number of men seized with the gaol-fever, and what proportion they bore to the whole number, employ'd by him in setting up the ventilator in Newgate. But with regard to what he says, in relation to the better health of the prisoners since the use of that machine, as the reverend Dr. Hales is making a strict inquiry about that circumstance, I shall delay making any reflections upon it, till I get full information from that worthy member of our Society.

To Dr. Pringle.

S I R,

Jan. 25, 1753.

**Y**OURS I receiv'd, and have sent you the names of all the workmen, that work'd on the ventilator in Newgate, and how many had the gaol-distemper. One of the principal men, whose name was Wilmot, died, and all the rest recover'd. I am inform'd by the person, whose name is Jackson, that takes care of the windmill and ventilators, that there had been but one person died in two months; whereas before the ventilator was used, there died six or seven in a week; so that it appears very plain, that the ventilator causes the foul stagnated air to circulate, and thereby consequently is drawn out of the several wards.

This is the best account I can give, and hope it is to your satisfaction. I remain, Sir,

Your humble servant to command,

Tho. Stibbs.

Mens names.

Mr. Sewel	*	Mr. Morris
Mr. Hand	*	Mr. Bates
Mr. Willmot	* died,	Mr. Thompson *
Mr. Letts		Burton, apprentice
Mr. Chaddock	*	Dobie, ditto *
Mr. Ruft	*	

*N. B.* All those mark'd \*, had the gaol-distemper.

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**VII.** *An Account of the great Alterations which the Islands of Sylley have undergone since the Time of the Antients, who mention them, as to their Number, Extent, and Position: In a Letter to the Rev. Thomas Birch, D.D. Secr. R. S. by the Rev. Mr. Wm Borlase, M. A. F. R. S.*

Reverend Sir,

Read Feb. 8,  
1753.

**H**AVING made a little tour to the islands of Sylley last summer, and finding them very different from what I imagin'd, and from the descriptions given us of them, and the trade to them, by the ancients, had concluded them to be, you will excuse my sending you an observation or two, which occur'd to me relating to their natural history, and the considerable alterations, which they must have undergone, since they were first taken notice of in history, and what I think may have been the cause of these alterations.

These islands being so noted among the antients, I expected to find among the inhabitants a conscious esteem